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SPECIALISTS AND SPECIAL LITERATURE.

Ought a specialist to have some acquaintance with the current literature of his specialty? Ought he to know what is going on in his branch of medical science and art? It might be thought that these questions could only be answered in the affirmative. Yet many who wish to be thought oculists have answered them in the negative. It is known to all who conduct ophthalmic journals that a large proportion of self-styled oculists never read any ophthalmic journal.

Just how large a proportion, it is difficult to estimate. Probably more than one-half of those who treat diseases of the eye as their special work do not read any of the seven ophthalmic journals regularly published in English. It is not necessary to take all the ophthalmic journals published. There is a great deal of duplication among them. But to take none at all indicates a very imperfect appreciation of professional responsibilities, a very low ideal regarding professional development.

The amount that any one student, however gifted and however favorably situated, can learn for himself is small. Ophthalmic science and art rest upon the experience and cooperation of a great number of students and practitioners. From the study of text-books, supplementing the teaching of student days, one may learn isolated facts of ophthalmic science. But their significance, their relative importance, their general bearings—in short, a practical mastery of these facts—is not to be gained from text-books and elementary teaching. Such a mastery is most completely accessible through personal contact, in clinical work and society discussions, with the methods and ideas of others. But in large measure it may be attained by the reading of current ophthalmic journals.

In the journal article the writer gives a much more complete and intimate idea of his own views and ways of thinking than he would give in the writing of a text-book. For the mass of ophthalmologists personal contact with the work of others must be exceptional, limited to a few days or weeks each year. For all so situated the reading of current journals is indispensable, if they are to gain even passable facility in the diagnostic and therapeutic methods of modern ophthalmology, or are to profit intellectually by their own clinical experience.

One who attempts ophthalmic practice as a specialty, without availing himself of the aid and stimulus of reading current journals and occasional contact with his fellow practitioners, will find himself hard pushed by the competition of aggressive optometrists and traveling quacks; and he will quickly go down as a generation of better equipped ophthalmologists arises to contest for the field of practice.

The failure to appreciate and support current journals is, in some ways, attended with more serious consequences among ophthalmologists than among the general practitioners of medicine. The former are more isolated, are less frequently brought into personal contact with colleagues engaged in the same line of work. Then the cheap medical journals, sample copies, drug-house publications, and pamphlets of the proprietary medicine firms, do keep the physician prodded with new suggestions, in a way for which the circulars of optical instrument makers are an imperfect substitute.

This common neglect of current ophthalmic literature has varied causes, and must be remedied in several ways. The publishers of ophthalmic journals, fearing to be credited with mere puffing of their own wares, have not sufficiently emphasized its existence. It is a neglect that must be recognized.

The general profession should be warned and on the lookout for these self-proclaimed specialists, without a systematic training or any disposition to make good their defective preparation, who seek to be recognized as experts in ophthalmology. It is as proper to require them to show some acquaintance with current ophthalmic literature, as to produce a medical diploma, or a certificate of attendance at some post-graduate institution.

BOOK NOTICES.

E. Treacher Collins, London, and **M. Stephen Mayou**, London. Pathology and Bacteriology, being a volume in an International System of Ophthalmic Practice, edited by Walter L. Pyle, of Philadelphia. 8vo. 574 pp. 3 col. plates, 237 figures in the text. Philadelphia, P. Blakiston's Son and Company.

These authors believe an inclusive description of diseases of the eye may be given by dividing them into the several processes which occur in its life-history. Adopting this plan, they have divided the book into chapters: (I) Aberrations in Development; (II) Neoplasms; (III) Derangements in the Circulating Fluids of the Eye, and of the Vessels in Which They Are Contained; (IV) Injuries; (V) Inflammations; (VI) Parasitic Diseases Affecting the Eye; (VII) Degenerations.

In Chapter III, besides diseases in the vessel walls and blood, are included the toxic amblyopias and glaucoma; Chapter IV considers bacteria, fungi, animal parasites, and (as probably due to micro-organisms) trachoma, vernal catarrh, and sympathetic ophthalmitis. The classification lends itself well to academic uses; and it is of some practical value, because it gives a grouping of facts somewhat different from that afforded by the older clinical, anatomical classifications. The presentation of facts is generally clear and concise. The text is not burdened with references or authors' names. But further elaboration or support of the views set forth is rendered accessible by references to papers already published by the authors, and their British colleagues; and to the work of a few investigators who are not British. The Appendix on Practical Methods gives valuable instruction in the obtaining and preparation of pathologic specimens.

Manual of Diseases of the Eye for Students and General Practitioners, by Charles H. May, M. D., Attending Ophthalmic Surgeon to Mt. Sinai Hospital, New York. Seventh edition, revised. 362 original illustrations, including 22 plates, with 62 colored figures. New York, William Wood and Company, 1911.

A book that within eleven years has attained its seventh edition, besides translation into six foreign languages, deserves attention, if only to discover the reasons for its unusual popularity. Its subject-matter is wisely chosen, and it is well written. But its pre-eminence is chiefly in its illustrations.

Its colored plates compare well in quality with those of the expensive atlases of ophthalmoscopy and the external diseases of the eye which are possessed by comparatively few ophthalmologists. One-sixth of its pages are devoted to the illustrations interspersed throughout the text. The author and publishers have appreciated the fact, that is so well understood by those conducting popular magazines, that a picture tells the story quicker, in less space, and in a way to be more generally understood, than the printed text. The principal change in the present edition is the introduction of a new chapter summarizing in fifteen pages the ocular manifestations of general diseases.

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